

the pending claims, as amended in light of the remarks presented herein, is respectfully requested.

AMENDMENTS

In the claims:

Please add new claim 26 as follows:

26. (New) The composition according to claim 25 wherein said linking moiety is a branched polymer.

[Please amend claim 1, 14, 23, 31 and 34 as follows:]

1. (Once Amended) A method for obtaining a cell population enriched in antigen-specific T cells, comprising the steps of:

a) [obtaining a mixed population of cells comprising T cells;

b)] exposing a [the] cell population comprising T cells to at least one antigen specifically recognized by a T cell receptor under conditions effective to elicit antigen-specific stimulation of at least one antigen-specific T cell and allowing expression of at least one product by the stimulated antigen-specific T cell, wherein the product is secreted in response to antigen stimulation of the cells;

b) [c)] modifying the surface of the cells to contain a capture moiety specific for the product such that the capture moiety is coupled to the cell surface;

c) [d)] culturing said population under conditions wherein said product is secreted, released and specifically bound to the capture moiety, thereby labeling the product-secreting cells; and

d) [e)] separating the cells according to the degree to which they are labeled with said product to obtain a population of cells substantially enriched in antigen-specific T cells, wherein steps a) [(b)] and b) [(c)] can be performed in any order.

11504/14. (Once Amended) A method to label antigen-specific T cells with a product secreted and released by the cells, wherein the product is secreted in response to antigen stimulation of said T cells, which method comprises:

exposing the antigen-specific T cells to at least one antigen specifically recognized by a T cell receptor under conditions effective to elicit antigen-specific stimulation of at least one antigen-specific T cell; [and]

modifying the surface of the antigen-specific T cells to contain a capture moiety specific for the product; and

culturing the cells under conditions wherein the product is secreted, released and specifically bound to the capture moiety, thereby labeling the product-secreting cells.

23. The composition according to claim [21]~~22~~ wherein the capture moiety is an antibody or an antigen-binding fragment thereof.

Sub C10/31. (Once Amended) A method of analyzing a population of cells to identify or enumerate antigen-specific T cells that secrete and release an amount of product relative to other cells in the population, wherein the product is secreted in response to antigen stimulation of the cells, the method comprising the steps of:

labeling the cells by the method according to claim 14,

labeling the cells with at least one additional label that does not label the captured product, and

detecting the amount of product label relative to the additional label.

Sub C11/34. (Once Amended) A method for identifying antigen-specific T cells secreting and releasing at least one product in response to antigen stimulation of said cells, comprising the steps of: